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ABSTRACT

This book examines the effects of a 1988 policy decision of the British Open University (OU) requiring all distance learners to acquire a personal computer (PC) on their own and use it to conduct their distance education as OU students. The following topics are discussed in the book's nine chapters: potential, history, and development of computers as educational tools; motivations and processes of adult learning; student computing at the OU (open learning and open access, media technologies in the OU system, uses of PCs by OU students); students' social and physical context (computers for study and leisure at home and elsewhere, interactions between learners); issues of access and equal opportunities (computers as barriers/aids to access, students with disabilities, demographic characteristics of distance education students using PCs); methods/models for teaching practical computing work in distance education (learning to use word processors and text editors, conceptual and mental models); institutional support for home-based computing (supporting students, tutorial staff, course writers, distance learners); the process of institutional change (political and economic context of the 1980s, innovations adopted/not adopted, change agents); and issues for the future (considerations for introducing PCs into hypermedia, CD-ROM, and collaborative learning). The bibliography lists 193 references. (MN)

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